A Trip to a Source of the Sarawak River and Bengkarum Mountains.

By C. J. Brooks.

At the end of September, 1908, I had the opportunity of making a jungle excursion and decided to follow the main stream of the so-called right hand branch of the Sarawak River to its source, cross the watershed to the upper waters of the Sambas River, visit Bengkarum Mountain, and return to Sarawak by Jagnay. As far as I am able to ascertain much of the country I passed through had not been visited by a European, certainly the ascent of Bengkarum Mountain had not been made, this together with the highly interesting botanical collection obtained makes a short account of the trip of sufficient interest to place on record. The start was made from Bidi on the Twenty-first of September, where I engaged eight Dyak coolies to carry necessaries and collecting materials, with a Malay to act as Mandor. The path taken was that over Gonong Tran through the old village of the Krokong Dyaks. Here we stopped for a few minutes to adjust the various loads; this village had two years before been completely abandoned as a bad epidemic of smallpox broke out there: the Dyaks are now returning and a number of new houses are being built on the old site in spite of the insanitary conditions which exist; the hill top having become a perfect midden from the accumulation of refuse dropped through the floors of the houses. I once tried with a ten foot iron probe (used for prospecting) to reach the hard ground but this I was unable to do anywhere in the immediate neighbourhood of the houses. Descending on the further side of the hill and taking the path to the river where the new village has been built, then through undulating country covered with new jungle to the B'down river which we forded, and then following for some hours a belt of old jungle, we finally forded the main stream at Tebang or Pangkaln Gumbang, which we reached at two o'clock. Here is a flourishing Chinese Kampong with several pepper gardens, the situation is extremely picturesque as the houses are interspersed with groups of cocoanut palms and the surrounding country is mountainous and rugged. To escape a heavy shower which commenced just as we arrived I took shelter in a Chinaman's house, my host, with the usual Chinese hospitality offered me a cup of tea; its fine flavour caused me to enquire where he had obtained it, I found that it was of his own cultivation: this is not unusual, many up country Chinese growing their own tea plants. leaving Tebang our path followed the river in which we had to wade for some distance—the stream was shallow and fast running with large boulders among the Krangan. Here in the clear space

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between the river banks were flying several specimens of the Leaf Butterfly (Kallima inachus buxtoni, More.) a great rarity in Sarawak; I was fortunate enough to capture two specimens while both of them were at rest; contrary to Wallace's observations in Sumatra they were quite easy to see, for one had alighted on the trunk of a large tree against the sky line, the other on a leaf overhanging the water. The guide missed the path leading from the river, taking us some miles in the wrong direction. The hills were now becoming very steep and following each other in constant succession as the road crosses the ranges at right angles to their direction. At dusk we entered a new clearing for a paddy field; this the coolies hailed with delight as the Teringos house for which we were making could not be far distant; the path where it entered the jungle again forked, which caused some hesitation but on my guide assuring me that either led to a house the choice was immaterial. After climbing a steep hill, the house came in view. In the dusk we could see that it was now a mass of ruins and had been abandoned for some time. Night closed in before we regained the road so that walking was now a difficult matter, becoming a succession of slips and scrambles down the hill: before going far we met a Dyak who was returning home with some bamboos filled with "Ire Noor," the slightly fermented juice of the sugar palm; this the coolies seized even before enquiring the way, which we now learned was only a short distance, and in a few minutes we were enjoying the welcome shelter of a house with rest and food after a tramp of nine hours. The next morning I decided to follow the river to the Teringos falls and if possible further. The river scenery is very beautiful, the banks in places rising in steep or precipitous cliffs covered with luxuriant vegetation, the river bed filled with enormous sandstone boulders breaking it into a series of cascades, in other places almost completely hiding it from view as it flows between them, I collected a number of interesting orchids and ferns, insects were rather scarce: only a few were taken, among them was a specimen of Melanitis zitenius, Herbst. Several others were observed and unlike Melanitis ismene were flying in the bright morning sunshine, their high and strong flight made them difficult to capture. To obtain if possible any interesting specimens of fish which might occur in an upland river, I exploded dynamite cartridges in two of the deep pools but with no result; nothing rose to the surface and a Dyak who dived assured that there were none at the bottom. A succession of minor falls were passed before reaching the chief, of which the total height must be over one hundred feet, it is broken into two cascades about twenty feet from the top: there was little water running now but after heavy rain when a large river is flowing the fall must be a magnificent sight.

The path led to the face of the cliff which formed the waterfall and continued over it by a series of steep ladders, these are of the usual Dyak type, small tree trunks with deep notches cut forming steps. Above the fall the river has excavated a deep valley

in the sandstone rock the sides of which are very steep, and the path follows a ledge somewhat below the summit, which in many places is broken by clefts and gullies bridged by battangs. After proceeding for some distance a very heavy storm broke compelling us to return to the house. The houses here are not of the type usual among land Dyaks, as each family has a detached building with a space of a few feet intervening between the houses, but they are connected by the usual bamboo platform—the roofs are extremely high pitched with ordinary flap windows, the internal arrangement is such that the space in front used for paddy pounding, etc., is often separated by a large outer door, thus dividing a house into two separate rooms.

I could learn nothing here of the route to Bengkarum, but most of the Dyaks were certain that from Trebong direction could be obtained, so I decided to proceed thither the following day. As the coolies were rather heavily loaded, I engaged the services of two more Dyaks: after allotting them their packages and starting I was somewhat surprised to see that one had transferred his load which was not a light one to a small girl of about eight years of age, his daughter, she, wishing to pay a call at a house which we should pass, accepted the "privilege" of Dyak women of carrying the men's load. By a short cut we joined the path at the falls and . proceeded practically from the place where we had returned the day previously; after walking for little more than an hour we descended the ridge and crossed the stream to a fairly level tract of country surrounded on three sides by mountains; near by in a large open space were several Dyak houses. As the situation was so pleasing and the country promised well for collecting I decided to spend the remainder of the day here; we accommodated ourselves and baggage in the house belonging to the head man. A series of moans from the adjoining house attracted my attention; on entering I found a young woman suffering from a severe colic. I ordered her Dyak friends to apply two bottles filled with hot water and for her immediate relief I administered a tabloid of Warburg Tinct. On returning in the evening I found the patient had not had the bottles of hot water. I enquired the reason and to my surprise learned that they had not yet lit a fire to cook their rice and could not think of doing so before their evening meal, although they had no doubt but that the hot water would be beneficial. It was not long before those Dyaks had a fire lighted and heated the water, before cooking the rice.

I now followed the course of the river in the bottom of the valley which I found to be a splendid collecting ground; my attention was immediately attracted by a beautiful scarlet orchid Dendrobium cinnabarium, growing plentifully on many trees and flowering freely, closely resembling in habit the Pigeon orchid; many other rare orchids and ferns occur here and a large nepenthes of elegant shape; insects were rather scarce, but among the few taken was a fine specimen of Ornithoptera Brookeana.

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In a house near my sleeping place were several large jars of salted Durien—the jars being very porous, the juice was oozing out and the scent was almost intolerable, I asked to have them removed and had great difficulty in getting this done as the Dyak owners could not apparently understand how such a luxury can be objectionable. During the evening a number of Dyaks came in to have a chat-chat, each bringing a small present of rice and eggs, I disappointed them when I refused their invitation to stay another night so that they could call their friends together and give a dance in my honour. By means of a boiling point thermometer I took the altitude and found it to be about fourteen hundred feet.

A good start was made the next morning at eight o'clock: the path now descending on the opposite side of the watershed was in some places extremely steep with deep gullies crossed by tree trunks felled so as to form bridges. As the heavy dew of the previous night had rendered them slippery care was necessary in crossing; for some hours we passed through new jungle which had been cleared within the last five years for paddy farming, and after fording a fair sized stream we climbed a ridge of old jungle and followed it for many miles, then descending and crossing an omah we arrived at Kapot at four o'clock. This is a large Dyak Kampong well situated on the bank of a rapid wide flowing river, and judging from the number of large fruit trees and palms growing here, it must have been an old settlement; the houses are all detached as at Teringos and of the same type, which gives it more the appearance of a Malay rather than Dyak Kampong, but the high pitched roofs present a striking contrast to both—all the houses are connected by the bamboo platform. On ascending we were immediately surrounded by a large crowd of Dyaks who expressed undoubted annoyance at our intrusion-my first enquiry was for the Orang Kaya, who at once came forward, and at my request for lodging, shewed us to the head house, which we entered with as many Dyaks following as the house would hold—the general cry was "what do you want?" to which I answered that I am a Tuan from Sarawak, taking a walk to Bengkarum collecting flowers and insects, I am not a government official tax collecting, and after shewing them some of my specimens, they appeared satisfied and most of them left the house, which gave us room to open and arrange our things. My coolies were very frightened at so suddenly coming amongst a strange and somewhat wild people speaking in a dialect which was unknown to them, and stood shivering in their wet clothes half inclined to try and persuade me to take the road home again. After having changed my clothes, and drunk a welcome cup of tea, I proceeded to explore the extent of the Kampong, at one end of which I came upon a large group of Dyaks dividing a fine catch of fish which they had just made and one of which had been previously given to me. The division is made, after removing the viscera, by chopping the fish into small pieces about an inch cube, then on a large mat one cube is placed for each family, and so again and again,

until all the pieces have been equally distributed: I counted fiftythree portions, then a further division was made from a vessel containing a most objectionable semi-cooked mass, which I was informed was the viscera. Each recipient having provided himself with a banana leaf twisted into the form of a cup, it was ladelled into these in small quantities at a time. At the finish it was a most disgusting sight to see a number of small children licking out the trough. I noticed that an unusually large number of the natives here were attacked by Corup and many of the women had stained their entire bodies with turmeric root—they state that this cures it, or perhaps only allays the irritation: the women were extremely frightened, and whenever I appeared, beat a hasty retreat, being the first white man they had seen. After my evening meal a large number of the natives came to see me, each bringing a small present of eggs or rice; among them was the Orang Kayah and his wife, the only woman who dared to come near or speak to me during my stay with them: they were both dressed in state costume, which consisted, in the case of the former, of a high crowned military cap with broad band of silver lace and button to match. given to him by the Dutch Government: the lady was wearing a gaily coloured bead cap about eight inches high and tapering considerably, together with a blue cotton jacket, the edges trimmed with beads: we discussed politics which were not considered to be in a very satisfactory condition here, paddy, and many other matters, and I was pleased to learn that Bengkarum or Krum, as it is called here, was at no great distance; and I heard that a Malay who represented the government was resident here and would call upon me in the morning; my visitors stayed until a late hour, I heard them talking long after I had retired to my curtain.

The next morning on descending to the river to bathe. I was surprised to find that the Dyaks of both sexes were bathing in a state of nudity. I understand however, that this is customary among Dyaks who are quite out of contact with Chinese or Europeans. The Malay official called while I was breakfasting, he was very polite, and offered any assistance that he could give me: as the coolies were tired after the long tramp of the previous day, I decided to let them rest, while I spent the time collecting in the neighbourhood, which did not prove very productive. From the summit of a hill I had a splendid view of Bengkarum Mountain which could not be more than ten miles distant. In the evening we had but few Dyaks to visit us, of these, two were men who had been most enthusiastic to accompany me, and had told me they knew the road to Bengkarum; they now explained that the purpose of their visit was to enquire if I really intended to go; if so, although previously having promised to go with me, they refused, and then with a great deal of talk I was given to understand that no one else would, in fact no one did go, there was no road, the mountain was quite unclimable and the place was so full of Antus (spirits) that something unlucky would happen; however, after

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repeatedly telling them that now I had come so far, if I could not get from this place, I would from another, they withdrew. I was much annoyed at this, and of course the coolies were much upset, half inclined to believe that the Antus had already started some mischief—they spent a very restless night, hardly any of them sleeping. In the morning I interviewed the Orang Kayah, he informed me that this information was in part correct, as the Dyaks here did not extend their excursions as far as this mountain; but from the next village I could most likely get directions and he would send a coolie to take me there. After waiting for some time for the promised coolie, I decided to apply to my Malay friend who

immediately directed a Dyak to act as my guide.

We commenced the journey by wading for some distance down the river and then began an extremely trying and severe ascent of Gonong Trebong: the road although good was exposed to a glaring sun at a very steep incline, it was nearly two hours before we gained the top of the ridge on which the house is situated, immediately below it is a spring of deliciously cold water issuing from a crack in the sandstone; the Dyaks told me that however dry the season this spring never fails. This house Lawang is extremely dirty and erected on the top of a very narrow ridge, the rocky sides of which are so steep that the only possible ascent is by ladders for the last fifty feet. We were greeted by a few women and children who directed us to the head house, which was barely large enough to accommodate all the coolies; it was annoying to find that all the men, or any who could direct us, were away in the jungle and not returning till sundown, so that this necessitated a wait until the following day: the view from this house is imposing; on one side of the ridge Mount Bengkarum stands out clearly against the sky, on the other a fine stretch of country as far as the eye could see looking towards Sarawak with ranges of hills in succession. The Dyaks here are a most unhealthy crowd, it was difficult to find a man, woman, or child, who was not affected with some form of skin disease or festering sores, despite the fine healthy situation of the house (which I found to be about two thousand feet above the sea level;) my Malay Mandor told me that he considered it due to the fact that their hill paddy is poor stuff and that they consume the entrails of any animal they kill.

There were a few heads hung in the apex of the roof of the head house and immediately below was constructed a broad shelf on which any youth sleeps who may wish to shew his courage; a conspicuous object in all head houses of this district is the "sekardoo," this is a large hollow wooden cylinder formed from the trunk of the Lune or other fairly light wood, varying from fifteen to twenty feet in length and about two feet six inches in diameter: over one end is tightly stretched a green hide from which the hair has been removed, they are slung at an angle below the floor of the head house, above which the hide covered end projects a few feet the one in this particular house was certainly over

twenty feet long and slung so that it was parallel with the slope of the hill. I understood that when beaten it could be heard at Gumbang, a distance of over twenty miles; formerly they were used to warn the district of head hunting raids, they are now going out of use. I was much amused in watching a number of youngsters constructing a head house for themselves, building on slender posts jammed into the crevices of the rocks on the steep side of the hill over which it hung most perilously.

There was no difficulty in finding a coolie to conduct us the next morning although they were not certain of the whole route. this we should learn at an intermediate house. An early start was made: from this altitude a heavy mist on the lowlands presented a somewhat curious effect, all the ridges and hill tops standing out clearly above it and isolated from each other like islands in a sea of white silent billows; about noon we reached a very dirty and dilapidated Dyak house, whence we obtained complete directions to Bengkarum, the way being through varied and hilly country: we soon commenced to ascend the lower slopes of the mountain; at four o'clock we reached Kampong Temong, a large Dyak house on a spur of the mountain; we accommodated ourselves in the head house, a very high awkward structure, but its airy position gave it a decided advantage over the usually low building, in that it was well above the most unpleasant association of a Dyak village, the scent of the pigs! My first visitor was an elderly gentleman who obviously wished to impress us with his importance; this was somewhat suddenly interrupted by the appearance of the Orang Kava himself, a fine, well made man; he told me on enquiring. that the ascent was an easy matter and that near the top was a large lanko (shelter) in which we could pass the night, as the ascent and descent could not be accomplished on the same day; he also arranged to have coolies ready for me to start the next morning. During the evening the elderly gentleman called, to say that he had decided to go with me and asked what provision we had made for water; as this seemed rather a serious matter. I told him that we could carry enough with us in bamboos; at this he gave a grunt and smile of superiority to which Dyaks at times give way, I found later in the evening that it was his little joke, there was plenty of water on top.

At eight o'clock the following morning all stores were packed and with my friend as guide we commenced the ascent; for some distance we followed a small stream and on its widening out into a good clear pool, I was astonished to see the elderly gentleman who was leading, stop and divest himself of the few clothes he was wearing. At my protest, he answered that it was a good place for a bath and he had not been there for some time. The ascent is steep but nowhere difficult, for a short distance the path is on a ridge formed by a sandstone bed, which has been thrown over at right angles to its plane of bedding. As it is not more than two feet wide and either side is a drop of fifty to eighty feet, the passage across

requires careful walking; the lanco was found to be commodious and in good condition, thatched with split bamboo and arranged in the usual manner; here we deposited our baggage and proceeded to

the summit, which was only a short distance.

Bengkarum Mountain, from the isolated position of this enormous mass of sandstone, its sudden rise and the long ridge of summit gradually increasing in height to terminate with precipitous abruptness at its eastern extremity is a conspicuous feature in the landscape for a radius of many miles; in plan it is roughly shaped like a capital Y, the two ridges which form the fork bearing towards the west; the ascent was made from the base of the southernmost of these; the summit at this end which is the lower, I found to have an elevation of 3,500 feet. It is a plateau of some width, the surface being very irregular, worn into deep gullies and depressions which in the overgrown jungle was well nigh impossible to travel over; for some distance I followed a small stream which forms the main drainage and flows to the fork, descending in a series of cascades; the banks are rich in filmy ferns and on a nearly submerged sandbank was growing a small fern which proved to be of considerable interest; being a new species which necessitated the formation a new genus. The Dyaks here collect large quantities of teardammar, these trees were very numerous and of large size. As usual at this altitude the ground was covered with Sphagnum, while the trunks and brushwood were also covered with other species of mosses.

As I was about to descend from the edge of the summit the magnificence of the view at once caught my attention; in the foreground was the further limb of the mountain covered with its deep green, the base thrown into deep shadow as the sun declined, while the stream as it cascaded down the mountain side gave life and contour; then beyond was range after range, in many places irregular and broken, lit by the full sunshine and as the distance increased the green gave place to blue with the final haze of the horizon. The conical summit of Mt. Nach could be seen to the

south-west well above all intermediate ranges.

While taking my evening meal the elderly gentleman asked for the chicken bones and much to the general amusement scrunched and swallowed them as well as any dog: the body of a small bird which I had skinned he stewed in a long bamboo, adding various herbs gathered in the neighbourhood. Some little excitement was caused by his difficulty in recovering it from the depths of this vessel, as he refused to split it. The night was bitterly cold with rain and wind which made sleep quite out of the question for the coolies, who had no extra clothing and tried as well as they could to keep warm by sitting over the fire, while I in woollen garments was in nearly the same plight. The following morning was spent collecting on the slopes and a fair number of insects were captured before the sky clouded and the whole mountain was covered in mist—which decided me to return to the Dyak Kampong.

As my collections were now in excess of the botanical paper I had brought with me. I resolved to make as hasty a return as possible to Bidi by way of Siluas. The next morning on making our way through the Dyaks paddy field, at the far entrance I came upon a splendid trophy which these Dyaks had erected as an offering to the spirits who guard the growth of their crops; it consisted of small sized wooden models of all the implements they use in agriculture as well as jars, parangs, and the common utensils of a Dyak house. As part of the journey to Siluas has to be taken by water from Pankalu Bobong, I was much disappointed on arriving there to find that the only boat which would hold my coolies and collections had left early that morning; a Malay trader here proved to be an old acquaintance of my Mandor and kindly ordered his son to try and hire one from a Dyak house a few miles distant; after waiting two hours I was only able to procure a small boat capable of holding four people, and as it was uncertain whether another would be procurable for some days. I decided to proceed in it, leaving my coolies to follow as soon as

they could.

A fair amount of Coffee is in cultivation here, doing well on the alluvial soil, the trees are healthy and full of berries. At dusk when nearing Siluas we overtook an old Dyak, whom I recognized as having worked for me at Bidi. At his suggestion I decided to stop the night at his house at Ire Lickie, which was convenient for starting the next day; this was a far more comfortable structure than is usual to find Dyaks living in-it had three separate compartments, the best of which was at once cleared for my use, while fresh eggs and rice were offered to me; as there were two other Dyaks beside my old coolie resident in the house I expected to obtain carriers easily the next morning, but on rising my hopes received a check as two of the men were prostrate, with high fever. This they told me was very prevalent in the neighbourhood of this river. After much persuasion I induced the remaining coolie to accompany me to the next village which we reached after two hours walk. This house Teberau consists of one long building and although low, is commodious; the Dyaks are of a type strange to any I had before met; it was more marked in the women who are of short stature and decidedly pretty, in feature akin to Tamil women. Without exception each woman was wearing a small plaited straw cap about six inches in height, tapering slightly, decorated with highly coloured geometric designs; in casual appearance there was little difference between these caps and those worn by the "Bombay" shopkeepers at Colombo. The Dyaks were in rather an excited condition as a Patrol of Dutch police had spent the night here and were at this late hour about to make a start; they were conducting back a Malay prisoner who had escaped from Sambas to Sarawak; here my coolie left me and it was only by promising the exorbitant sum of two dollars each that I could persuade two others to take his place as far as Bidi.

At two o'clock we reached Pankalu Babong; from here the distance was too great to reach Bidi the same day, which was annoying after a comparatively short day's walk. This was a large well built Kampong, the Dyaks, some of them big strapping men, are of the Jaguay type to which tribe they claim kinship although they are Dutch subjects. A great deal of noise was being made in the head house, caused by beating of gongs and gindans. On enquiring the reason I heard that some six months ago they had obtained a head, having been called out by the Government in an expedition against some rebellious tribes at the ulu of the Sambas river; the festivities with which they had feasted the head were still being kept up by the younger members of the house; on inspection I found the head had been divided, having been shared with another house. It was lying in a small shelter which had been made to receive it, containing various offerings placed near it, eggs, tobacco, etc.

At about nine o'clock I was very pleased to see my coolies arrive. They had constructed a raft and were thus enabled to follow me quickly. I could now dispense with my engaged help at my own rate of pay. An early start the next morning brought us to

Pangkalm Tipong at one o'clock and to Bidi an hour later.

I should like to conclude by saying a word respecting my excellent Malay Mandor Mahomet who was at all times ready to carry out my wishes and assist in every possible way to the desired end, and to Madoo the best of Krokong Dyaks.

A List of the more interesting ferns collected at Mount Bengkarum and elsewhere.

Cyathea Surawakensis, Hooker. Among the rocks by Tringos Falls.

Matonia pectinata, R. Br. This is probably the form described by Mr. Copeland, as M. Foxworthyi. Mt. Bengkarum at 3,500 feet, growing in large masses.

Gleichenia vestita, Bl. Mt. Bengkarum summit.

Nephrolepis acuminata, (Houtt) Kuhn. Mt. Bengkarum at 3,000 feet terrestrial.

Didymochlacna lunulata, Desv. Mt. Bengkarum at 2,500 feet. Dryopteris calcarata, O. Ktze. Banks of Sarawak River near Gumbang.

penangiana var. Calvescene, Christ. Mt. Bengkarum at 3,000 feet.

,, mindanaensis, Christ. Mt. Bengkarum at 2,500 feet. ,, athyriocarpa, Copeland. Mt. Bengkarum at 2,500 feet.

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Davallia pedata, Sm. Mt. Bengkarum at fron 2-3,000 feet. A common epiphyte on trunks. A somewhat unusual form, occuring also at Mt. Penrissen Sarawak.

ciliata, Hooker. Mt. Bengkarum, epiphytic on trunks

at 2,500 feet.

contigua, Swartz. Mt. Bengkarum at 3,000 feet. common epiphyte.

Protolindsaya Brooksii, Copel. Genus et spec. Nov. Philipp, Journal Sc. Vol. 5. No. 4. Mt. Bengkarum at 3,500 feet, growing on Sandbank in small stream.

Plagiogyria pycnophylla, var integra, Copel. var. Nov. Journal Sc. Vol. 5, No. 4. New to Borneo. Mt. Bengkarum at 3,500 feet, growing in large clumps, seldom fertile.

Blecknum Blumzi, Moore, or near it. Mt. Bengkarum summit. Asplenium subaquatile, Ces. Ire Lickie River, on trunks overhanging stream.

persicifolium, J. Sm. Mt. Pengkarum at 3,000 feet.

trifoliatum, Copel, Sp. nova. Philipp Journal Sc. Vol. 5. No. 4. On moist rocks in old jungle. Sambas near Tringos.

filiceps, Copel, Sp. nova. Philipp Journal Sc. Vol. 5. No. 4. Tringos, epiphytic on trunks over river.

Syngramma Hookeri, C. Ch. Mt. Bengkarum at 3,000 feet.

Vittaria longicoma, Christ. Tringos on trunk over river.

Polypodium Zippelii, Bl. Sarawak River Tringos, on shady bank.

New to Borneo.

incurvatum, Bl. Mt. Bengkarum at 2-3,000 feet. A common epiphyte.

Dryostachyum splendens X Polypodium heracleum, probably a hybrid of these, see Philipp Journal Sc. Vol. 5 No. 4. Mt. Bengkarum at 3,000 feet. A large clump fallen from a tall tree.

Elaphoglossum petiolatum (Sw.) Urban. Mt. Bengkarum at 3,000 feet. New to Borneo.